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Reflections on Mimetic Escalation, Order, and the Nature of Peacemaking in the Shadow of Brexit

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In his final original book, *Battling to the End*, Girard could hardly have been clearer:

"Violence" he wrote, "can no longer be checked. From this point of view we can say that the apocalypse has begun."[1] (Girard, 2010, p. 210)

Faced with the rise of global Islamist terror and the declaration of a 'war against terror' Girard observed the collapse of politics as a mechanism to contain violence. History is not inevitably and dialectically converging on a rational Hegelian *Aufhebung* but has the pattern of a duel, as observed by the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz after the defeat of the Prussian army by Napoleon's revolutionary French army at Jena. Far from converging on reconciliation, the logic of mimetic rivalry predicts escalation to the extremes. For Girard, the intellectual task was to follow von Clausewitz's insight to its logical conclusion (to 'complete Clausewitz' as the French title of his book demands), a path from which even the Prussian theorist himself had shrunk:

"In a more realistic manner than Hegel, Clausewitz showed the utter powerlessness of politics against the escalation to extremes. Ideological wars,

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monstrous justifications of violence, have led humanity to the stage beyond war where we are today." (Girard, *Battling*, 209–10)

By focussing on the implications of globalisation, Girard in one sense concurs with business writer and commentator Thomas Friedman who pronounced in 2005 that 'the world is flat'[2] (Friedman, 2005). 500 years after Columbus, Friedman points out that political, historic and geographical differences were less and less decisive in a unitary global economy where all competitors increasingly operated on the same rules. Furthermore, mimetic change is taking place in multiple locations: the end of the Cold War, the spread of digital technology, the breaking down of international barriers through the availability of information, the sharing of work across all physical boundaries through file sharing (uploading), the creation of global supply chains and the ability to collaborate through constant communication. Accordingly, no 'state' is now bigger than the market and all workers are increasingly direct competitors. The rise of social media and the internet has only further turbo-charged Friedman's drift. Things which once separated—including physical distance, time, size and scale, public and private—have progressively become blurred, if not indistinguishable.

Optimistically, Friedman asserted that the world was now held together by the rational self-interest of what he dubbed 'the Dell theory of conflict resolution' in which no two countries that are part of a major global supply chain (like Dell) will ever fight a war against each other (Friedman, 421). In contrast, Girard emphasised escalating mimesis of desire as the defining characteristic of globalised human relations and identified instead the potential implications of the elimination of remaining cultural differences as human living together in a world of unrestricted global mimetic rivalry. The phenomenon of global rivalry is also echoed by Pankraj Mishra who has charted the mimetic unity of seemingly disparate phenomena spreading from Europe into the smallest corner of the global system[3] (Mishra, 2017). Political and social aspiration leading to frustration have turned politically toxic. Radical identities have emerged in post-colonial societies fundamentally shaped by their oppositional relationship to their opponent.

For Girard, violence in human affairs does not arise from essential difference but from escalating rivalry over the same objects, and from the consequent elimination of differences. Girard disputes Samuel Huntington's thesis that the underlying dynamic of global warfare is cultural *difference* leading to a 'clash of civilizations'[4] Instead he roots the political crisis in the rapid erasure of many of the cultural separations and differences. In a world without boundaries all distinction between inside and outside collapses. The process broadly described as 'globalisation' has now reached the point where no culture is closed, and

therefore no person outside the mimetic influences of the wider world. In the absence of restraining cultural limits, efforts to assert differences paradoxically both escalate and disappear in mimesis of desire for the same object and an escalating frenzy of reciprocity and, eventually, violence. The resulting 'crisis of undifferentiation' renders all cultural mechanisms, including politics, ineffective in restraining the mimetic forces released.

The 'long road to global flatness' which Friedman identifies is, in Girard's view, largely a consequence of the revelation of the innocence of the scapegoat in the New Testament and its mediation in western society and around the globe through Christianity. The gradual unfolding of this revelation has dissolved the distinctions on which culture is based, above all disabling the fundamental claim to use 'good violence' to protect against 'bad violence'. In a 'crisis of undifferentiation' cultural mechanisms including politics are ineffective in restraining the mimetic forces released.

Both Paul Dumouchel and Wolfgang Palaver have examined the way in which these insights have emerged in modern politics. Dumouchel explores how traditional cultures protected themselves against internal violence by discounting violence externally (against those in the 'third circle') and through the strict regulation of internal obligation, generating what he calls the 'space of solidarity and hostility', in which the two are intimately linked. By extending the concept of neighbour beyond kinship groups, Christianity enabled the establishment of a civic sphere of equality under the modern state. At the same time, however, the existence of civic equality also had the effect of loosening the bonds of tradition and kinship.

The modern state replaces sacred kinship obligations with the exercise of the monopoly of violence within a given territory with clear boundaries. Inside the boundaries, the overarching principles are the twin concepts of rationality and equality. A modern territory is "a hybrid space of physical space and moral predispositions. A territory means the establishment of moral relationships, relationships of political hostility and friendship, not in function of kinship, lineage, membership of a given order or social status but by borders set in physical space."[5] Without territory the state (the space of the monopoly of violence and hence of rationality and equality) has no clear meaning. Until World War I, however, western states were able to establish internal boundaries while maintaining a distinction between the metropolitan area in Europe where the rule of law applied and its colonies outside where acts of violence unacceptable within the core state were formally legitimated in what Giorgio Agamben has called 'the state of exception'[6]. After the short interlude of the Cold War, this is precisely what has disappeared in globalisation.

Agamben drew on the work of the German jurist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt whose reputation was tarnished for many years as a result of his membership of the Nazi Party in the 1930s. Famously, Schmitt defined the essence of the political as the distinction between 'friend' and 'foe'. Peace and law are based on 'spatial enclosures' ("Hegungen im räumlichen Sinne")[7]. For Schmitt, the greatest threat to peace was the dissolution of the state in internal chaos, a threat which he saw as inherent within the global pretentions of liberalism. Drawing from Hobbes, Schmitt saw the achievement of the Leviathan as 'one monster holding down all the other monsters', preventing civil war through an internal monopoly of legitimate violence: "Security exists only in the state. *Extra civitatem nulla securitas.* The state absorbs all rationality and all legality. Everything outside of the state is therefore a 'state of nature.'"[8]

Both Dumouchel and Wolfgang Palaver revisit Schmitt's work as the clearest articulation of the territorial principle in political order. As Wolfgang Palaver comments: "In order to overcome the state of nature, this chaotic and warlike condition has to be transferred from the inside of the state to its outside, to its relationship with other states."[9] The intentional embrace of 'official' external enemies is a political necessity to contain the greater risk of internal collapse. Although superficially drawing on Christianity as the transcendent internal principle of western society, Wolfgang Palaver shows conclusively that Schmitt's 'Christianity' is dependent on his understanding of the concept of the church as *katechon*, an ambivalent institution relying on violence to hold back greater violence. For Schmitt, the point was to 'de-anarchise' Christianity and to render the effect of Christ harmless in the social and political sphere, as both Hobbes and Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor had already suggested.

In practice, however, the drift toward de-territorialisation has only been interrupted and never arrested since World War I. Woodrow Wilson's efforts to redesign European Empires on the principle of territorial nationalism collapsed into a nightmare of arbitrary violence exercised on an ethnic, racial and ideological grounds in the 1930s and 40s[10]. Since then it has been seen to fail with dramatic consequences in the Balkans, the former Soviet Union and the Middle East. The postwar withdrawal of European states from Africa and Asia both removed the existence of a state of exception for European states and set off struggles to impose a monopoly of violence in a context of significant internal divisions and ideological polarization with powerful echoes of European experience (Mishra, 2017). When the end of the Cold War removed the binary principle of postwar global politics the era of globalization arrived. As Paul Dumouchel observed:

> We no longer have the territorial order, a continuous isotropic space of which each part is external to each other . . . The extent of these secure spaces is not determined by international agreements, but by the relation of power between adversaries. In fact the protection, fortified walls innumerable identity checks, and biometric security are there because borders have ceased playing a role. "Foes" cannot be recognized on the basis of their passport alone . . . Territory's disappearance goes hand in hand with the disappearance of equality and the rule of law, features of the territorial order. The 'others', the 'foes' are different from us, and they are not always reasonable. There is thus no reason for us to give them the protection of the law, which they are ready to break . . . Now that the enemies are among us, hidden everywhere and anywhere, they can be anyone . . . (Dumouchel, 166–67)

One of the most obvious consequences is that the decline in inter-state warfare has been accompanied by the rise of internal war and so called 'failed states' together with the growth of nebulous and non-territorial foes in terrorism and the security state. The field is now open, as John-Pierre Dupuy argues, to a global form of mimetic rivalry:

> Resentment unites the very actors who mutually excommunicate each other. It is now on a planetary scale that the game of mimetic rivalry will play itself out, a game that binds the rivals all the more compulsively and tightly together even as they claim to have nothing in common. The image that appears to emerge—in place of the 'clash of civilisations' slogan invoked by those who do not understand the state of the world—is that of a civil war within a single global civilization, which has come into being kicking and screaming.[11]

BREXIT IN THE CRISIS OF UNDIFFERENTIATION

Since the referendum in the United Kingdom on whether to remain or leave the European Union in June 2016, it has become ever clearer that previous presumptions about stability and continuity in the UK may no longer be reliable. Brexit may be understood as a secondary symptom in the wider crisis of rising mimetic anxiety and its impact on politics, but the spread of radical political uncertainty into the UK and USA, the core of the postwar Western political order, suggests that no part of the global system is immune in a broader crisis of undifferentiation. A political and constitutional system that was once assumed to be a model of stability and held up as a successful and early example of the peaceful 'end of history' has become an arena of immobility, political polarisation, increasingly

violent rhetoric and a tangible anxiety that the system itself may not survive the internal enmities unleashed.

The campaign to leave the EU in the UK spoke seamlessly to powerful residual fears about fading British distinctiveness, amplifying long-evident anxieties and divisions about the decline of British identity and prestige. Uniquely in Europe, the second world war was interpreted, in retrospect at least, as a national triumph—indeed as THE heroic struggle of British history. But it was also rather obviously a watershed, where everything that followed was marked by loss of political prestige, accelerated by the deep and unmistakable fear of loss of any semblance of economic autonomy in the European Union and in the face of globalisation. The collapse of the global banking economy in 2009 made visible the existence, predicament and resentment of a largely white and often male poor: the core of the heroic generation of 1945 was now without kinship ties of hostility and solidarity. As Paul Dumouchel comments: "Indifference to the outcasts of exchange who are responsible for their own misfortune and to whom no one owes anything, is the everyday ordinary form of the banality of evil" (Dumouchel, 139)

In this context, the European Union increasingly came to play the role of external other for one part of the population. European integration was identified as the primary source of humiliation, and at the hands of the wartime enemy. A 'Europe' that was never 'us' now became the resented 'other' instead of a solution in the face of retreat from Empire and the special relationship with the USA. Britain in this narrative was always at risk of being a second-class participant in a Franco-German project. Resentment, especially against immigration, even where it was not immediately visible but especially where it was perceived to have been enabled or encouraged in the European Union, became a convenient focus. But it was also striking that those campaigning for remaining in the European Union seemed unable to make any compelling case for a European project, relying entirely on pragmatic necessity to persuade.

But the most striking aspect of living 'in Brexit' has been the speed with which a specific question about the European Union in 2016 escalated into a crisis about everything by 2019. Both during and after the referendum, the evidence of an escalating mimetic crisis spread everywhere and the absence of the ability of the political system to mediate and channel those resentments was increasingly obvious. A division only slightly more than 50–50 was further complicated by geographic, and national-political variation. A referendum about restoring the 'sovereignty of parliament' itself created havoc about whether the referendum result or a parliamentary majority was sovereign. A campaign designed to 'take back control' from an external power increasingly became a

knife-edge battle for control between internal rivals. Cosmopolitanism, itself a proxy for political and economic resentments over regional and class disputes, became a target. The Prime Minister defined the battle to deliver Brexit as one between the people 'from somewhere' and others 'from nowhere'. Reports of targeted hate crime attacks on identified minorities rose measurably. Amidst accusations against 'enemies of the people' and 'saboteurs,' the rhetoric of politics increasingly reflected the language of 'friend and foe.' Legislation on all but the most urgent other matters came to a halt. Very different results in distinct parts of the UK, notably Scotland, reopened political rivalries about independence and the future of the UK state. In Northern Ireland, rivalries over the border threatened to reopen old wounds. Economic rivalries, generational rivalries and resentments about rapid immigration and anxieties about sexuality and gender interacted with fears about minorities, and Muslims in particular and all increasingly wrapped in a single crisis of undifferentiation, without any clear mechanism for resolution.

NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE CRISIS OF THE POLITICAL

The spread of global uncertainty now appears to includes states previously regarded as impervious to systemic crisis. Critically, for Girard, the origin of the process is not cultural difference but the loss of distinctiveness leading to escalated mimetic rivalry:

> The error is always to reason within categories of "difference" when the root of all conflicts is rather "competition," mimetic rivalry between persons, countries, cultures. Competition is the desire to imitate the other in order to obtain the same thing he or she has, by violence if need be. No doubt terrorism is bound to a world "different" from ours, but what gives rise to terrorism does not lie in that "difference" that removes it further from us and makes it inconceivable to us. To the contrary, it lies in an exacerbated desire for convergence and resemblance. Human relations are essentially relations of imitation, of rivalry.[12]

For Girard, events like Brexit are not so much the 'cause' of undifferentiation as a 'scene.' The erosion of cultural difference is not so much political as fundamentally anthropological.

In this context, geopolitical accident ironically also makes Northern Ireland a sobering place from which to observe mimetic processes.

Northern Ireland's exceptionalism has a number of aspects. Until recently, it was been regarded in western capitals as endemically unstable and managed as a particular kind of 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005) since 1920. Endemic conflict in Northern Ireland was treated as an 'atypical', 'deviant' and abnormal' special case in English-speaking democracy. Secondly, and as an unintended consequence of this exceptionalism, its small size allowed its escalation to the extremes to be limited through the ultimately overwhelming force of the United Kingdom state. Thirdly, within the Brexit 'Russian doll', Northern Ireland has taken on a particular prominence triggered by the impact of British withdrawal from the EU on the unusual inter-national constitutional and border arrangements which were the central element of the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement (1998).

Northern Ireland was carved out of the rest of Ireland in 1920 in a last-ditch effort at a territorial solution in Paul Dumouchel's sense of "the establishment of . . . relationships of political hostility and friendship, not in function of kinship, lineage, membership in a given order or social status, in other words, not by person-to-person ties but by borders set in physical space." (Dumouchel, 70) Carl Schmitt reveals the division between 'friends' and 'foes' as the essential core of the political (Schmitt, 2007). The border in Ireland utterly failed to make this separation. Instead the new border incorporated a substantial minority of Irish Catholics on the 'wrong' side of the frontier, refusing legitimacy to the new Northern Ireland state, both preventing the establishment of a monopoly of violence and any capacity to define friend and foe on the basis of international frontiers.

Lacking a secure 'space of hostility and solidarity', Northern Ireland 'contained' political and ethnic competition in both senses of containment. But if the border did not neatly separate friend from foe, the unanticipated benefit for the rest of the UK and Ireland was that it neatly separated the 'areas of monopoly' from their most complicated 'state of exception.' The territory that became Northern Ireland separated the area of greatest mimetic pressure and closest similarity from the rest of the UK and Ireland, creating and containing an explosive and never ending rivalry between parties that were less voluntary associations than 'groups to which people belonged from birth to death' (Dumouchel, 74).

Unusually, however, the combination of its small size, isolated location and separate institutions allowed the potentially violent implications of its relationships to be held 'at arms-length', quarantined as a unique 'exception' from the rest of both UK and Ireland. Safe on the western side of Europe, the UK feared no external rival. Northern Ireland became a repelling 'mimetic black hole'

rather than an attracting object of desire between Britain and Ireland. Northern Ireland's existence created a spatial barrier between the UK and Ireland interrupting the temporal continuity of their own quarrel. Rather than 'a place between', Northern Ireland was now 'a place apart'[13]

Steps by the local government to impose a monopoly of violence in fact institutionalised 'friend' and foe' relationships (defined locally as 'sectarianism') in all aspects of society. Suspicion, alienation and sporadic violence were 'normal' rather than 'exceptional'. As Dumouchel predicts, suspicion was, for its victims, entirely rational. But for as long as violence was invisible, responsibility for, and even the existence of, violence could be publicly denied even if its ghost was ever-present. Languishing in an endless but limited cycle of revenge, UK and Ireland contented themselves that Northern Ireland's apparently endemic polarisation was backward, locally-generated and exotic rather than the consequence of shared and unresolved historic rivalry.

In the late 1960s, when violence escalated, it was the speed that took almost everyone by surprise. Indeed it looked at first as though escalation was unstoppable. Carrying residual responsibility for maintaining order, the United Kingdom deployed troops on the streets in 1969. Trained for deployment in war or in colonial contexts at far distance from citizen-view, the British army was now under the scrutiny of nightly TV cameras. A force designed for deployment against 'external' foes was deployed in an 'internal' context, and was unable to extricate itself for over 30 years. Deployment of the army underlined the ambiguous position of Northern Ireland in the UK as the 'internal external' of the state.

The British dilemma was obvious: establishing a monopoly of violence indicated an escalating use of force to one side, but an escalation of force exposed the complicity of the state in violence and equally undermined any residual legitimacy. Drawn into the middle of an armed and arming society and enforcing emergency law, the army struggled to maintain the distinctiveness between law and violence. The collapse of legitimacy had fatally undermined the state's claim to monopoly on violence, without creating any alternative. As Benoit Chantre makes clear, only a monopoly "has the luxury of striking at the heart of violence, of punishing the guilty party without being afraid that the punishment will have harmful consequences for the whole group." (Chantre, 2018, p. 99)

The UK found itself caught between treating Northern Ireland as an external case of extra-territorial insurgency (friend and foe) and an internal territory where the rule of law applied.

Both the use of force and the absence of force by the state could potentially escalate a mimetic vortex in Northern Ireland. An external 'foe' was simultaneously an internal 'friend'. Instead of excluding the guilty party, law was at risk of escalating the rivalr. On the one side, all efforts to impose a political peace based on distinguishing between 'friend of foe' eroded rather than reinforce any moral differences between the state and its competitors, stoking violence and creating victims. On the other, arm's-length management still left the failure of the UK state to protect its citizens visible. Reluctantly, the British government concluded that it could no longer manage indirectly but must take direct responsibility for enforcement and at the same time limiting the nature of state response by modifying emergency law and removing political power from the local partisan government (Unionists). As Chantre remarks, the transcendence of justice turned out to be very precarious.[14]

By changing the balance of power, direct 'management' of Northern Ireland eventually served to slow down the escalation and reach of terrorism, but at the cost of attenuating violent conflict over decades, a process which inevitably made both violence and the suffering of victims on all sides the consistent visible reality and drew in both state and non-state into its single narrative. Above all, however, the crisis of undifferentiation between bad violence and good violence was unresolved and embedded in political and social relationships.

But for a post-war western state in the middle of the Vietnam crisis, visible participation in extra-legal killing of unarmed citizens, failure to prevent ethnic cleansing and enacting emergency law on its own territory undermined not only the legitimacy of the UK state but of the entire western human rights project by extending the crisis of undifferentiation and exposing the cultural origins of the state in violence. Caught between designating an internal enemy and failing to do so, the informal state goal in Northern Ireland was no longer a monopoly but an 'acceptable level' of violence, managing residential space to ensure separation and seeking new local political solution. In the shadow of the holocaust and the midst of the Cold War, Northern Ireland stood as an embarrassing indictment in the West but the escalation to the extremes, always latent, never fully emerged.

Ultimately the persistent visibility of violence and the weakness of the state drove Britain and Ireland into a new approach to restore monopoly. Northern Ireland became the chance beneficiary of a highly unusual set of circumstances for old enemies: structured mimetic distance between Northern Ireland and its surrounding territories over decades, opportunities of co-operation within a European framework that allowed both parties to recalibrate embedded pattern of post-colonial rivalries and the profound sensitivity of all western states to the

revelation of complicity with violence. Faced with an apparently limitless and self-perpetuating spiral of revenge, UK stumbled after 15 years into a historically unprecedented political partnership with Ireland, as the only remaining avenue to establish sufficient legitimacy to exclude competitor violence in Northern Ireland. Supported by both the US and EU (the whole world), Britain and Ireland became more or less enthusiastic allies, devising, negotiating and managing a complex constitutional framework in a shared 'problem child' (third party) to promote 'reconciliation.' Above all, the shared unexpected appearance of a shared British-Irish framework for legitimacy held out the promise that violence outside that legitimacy could be identified and isolated.

The 1998 Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement drew on all of the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland to recalibrate a 25-year revenge cycle. To address the friend and foe politics which had predominated until then and shaped the identity of Britain and Ireland, both states agreed that everyone in Northern Ireland could in perpetuity self-identify as citizens of either state, or both, and would be treated with full citizen equality. In redrawing the 'space of hostility and solidarity' in Northern Ireland they created a new form of territoriality where British sovereignty was encapsulated within a new 'shared' project in which citizens of both British and Irish people were to be treated with formal equality. The sovereign state itself was explicitly subordinate to international human rights law. After 30 years of killing, shared membership of the European Union (implicitly) and the European Convention on Human Rights (explicitly) created the transcendent context for 'reconciliation' without explicit retreat from the Westphalian principle of territoriality.

However, lucidity about reconciliation in the British and Irish governments remained rooted in the 'state of exception.' Northern Ireland was 'elsewhere', where compromises over justice could be contemplated. It was important to connect these concessions, including territoriality and citizenship arrangements, to 'the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.' Reconciliation was primarily conceived as a matter for those inside Northern Ireland.

But here, 'reconciliation' had to be squared with the determination NOT to be treated as special. The compromise was to make reconciliation 'aspirational' (in the future), to bring active violence to an end (present) and to rely on self-interest and working together as the bridge.

The most vulnerable point for the hoped-for rational consensus lay in the mimetic legacy of violence which continued to demand revenge (euphemistically acknowledged as 'the past'). The parties sharing government remained existentially committed to maintaining the primary responsibility of the other. All sides allergically rejected 'equivalence.' Yet in a profound sense this was their

greatest similarity. Political identity required the maintenance of the boundary between good and bad violence, and thus between friend and foe. Given the widespread use of 'state of exception' methods, this was not only a question for 'terrorists' but also a question for governments. But to the growing consternation of the state apparatus and its supporters, international human rights law designed to judge Nazism and Communism meant that British (or Irish) violence could be brought to court with greater certainty of success and greater international judicial weight than that of non-state 'terrorist' antagonists.

Nobody was prepared to renounce their own part, without first denouncing the primary responsibility of the other. Nobody conceded that killing was a responsibility shared in a mutual mimetic relationship. At the same time, any process in relation to 'crimes' committed under the conditions of the unusually long state of exception which was not controlled by an internal party would inevitably point to that which all parties wished to avoid: the elimination of most of the differences between warring parties and between law and crime—equivalence, aka undifferentiation.

In the absence of anyone asking for or seeking to be forgiven as a prelude to restored relationships, the practical political consensus was that truth-telling would be avoided where it would threaten the internal mythical narrative of the group. Differentiation would be maintained as unresolved: you keep your truth about who was responsible for murder, and I will keep mine. Formal truth-telling, acknowledgement or forgiveness could not be enforced and would actually rekindle mimetic antagonism, threatening the limited political achievement of capping the level of physical violence. Consequentially, political rivalry shifted to control over the legal truth-telling mechanism itself, and political relationships remained mimetically bound to the myths of the past. The primary value of victims was in their capacity to expose the narrative of the other, but there was little hope of their vindication in the face of the perpetrator. Both revenge and reconciliation were unfulfilled.

Reconciliation could not be enforced, even as it was clear that all real change depended on it. Political effort was rededicated, perhaps inevitably, to the old goal—containment and maintaining 'the peace' in the face of the unresolved mimetic antagonism and the resentment it continued to foster. Political wisdom directed that reconciliation would be accommodated to the limits of politics in Northern Ireland rather than vice versa. Political success depended on defining a space within which mimetic resentment could continue unhindered without destroying the system.

The hope was that the absence of violence could be secured by rational political self-interest and financial incentive. But the peace now depended on

the capacity of the UK and Ireland to assure some monopoly of legitimacy by supporting the system. As time passed, the absence of immediate threat resulted in increasing neglect. When economic disruption distracted the attention of both Dublin and London, there was visible impatience with the failure of Northern Ireland to resolve its internal crisis and no appetite to do more than prop up what remained of the system and maintaining mimetic distance.

The pattern that emerged was of endless mini-crises. Mimetic re-escalation was triggered by issues defined as friend-or foe in Northern Ireland and internal political stability collapsed. Stability could only be re-established by reluctant inter-governmental arbitration. Uninterested in responsibility to engage unresolved mimetic resentment and determined to avoid direct responsibility, the primary and shared political goal of all parties was to prevent internal weakness becoming an externally visible crisis. Under the mantra 'better than before', all politicians agreed that the benefits of arms-length emergency management of an unstable political peace outweighed both the prior mimetic crisis and the risks of taking direct responsibility.

The Brexit referendum took place without serious attention to Northern Ireland in the UK. Seeking to act supportively, concern in Dublin was voiced quietly. However, the peace in Northern Ireland had been constructed to deny the scale of the risk and to obscure and deflect any responsibility for it from all actors. However unwittingly, the unilateral decision to leave the EU automatically put the monopoly by which violence had been contained at risk, setting in train a renewed rivalry over Northern Ireland, now entangled with an internal British polarisation and a wider European crisis over Brexit. With direct EU engagement as a negotiating party in Brexit, the previous mimetic 'distance' of Northern Ireland from global affairs was significantly reduced. If international consensus was replaced by national egotism as the centre of sovereignty, the brakes on mimetic escalation were removed. In the absence of a British-Irish model, Northern Ireland was confronted with the limits of politics as a cultural mechanism for peace.

UNDIFFERENTIATION

The Brexit experience, and the place of Northern Ireland within it, provide visible evidence for Girard's contention that conflicts in the modern world both arise in undifferentiation and accelerate the process of undifferentiation. The weakening of state authority in the context of globalisation results not so much from increasing difference, but from closer mimesis with that 'difference,' and

therefore increasing similarity. In a world where the sacred nature of difference no longer applies, 'difference' is increasingly fetishized. In the absence of firm boundaries, the potential for unrestrained mimetic rivalry and the replacement of external conflict (wars) with internal crisis has escalated to include states which were previously regarded as impervious to systemic crisis.

The additional contribution of Girard and what might be called the 'Girardian school' in recent years has been to draw attention to the central contribution of Christianity in the unmasking of the scapegoat mechanism. The central narrative of the innocence of the victim at its core has acted to reveal both the violence underpinning cultural order and disarming the capacity of cultural mechanisms to establish and maintain order:

> The true engine of progress is the slow decomposition of the closed worlds rooted in victim mechanisms. This is the force that destroyed archaic societies and henceforth dismantles the ones replacing them, the nations we call 'modern.'[15]

By placing the crucifixion and resurrection at the central theme of social cohesion, Christianity after Constantine was always ambivalent, both upholding cultural order and simultaneously dissolving its sacred claims by disabling all further efforts to sacralise violence through scapegoating. As Benoît Chantre points out, it is the cross "which reveals the secret of the founding murder, makes it possible to know that flagrant injustice exists, but also to 'realise that this man's hideous torture was the price of our existence.'" (Chantre, 93)

For some political thinkers, including Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, the Christian revelation was not so much a cause for celebration as for profound alarm. Common to them all is a visible anxiety, that the disabling of the Hobbesian Leviathan at the heart of the state would remove the primary vehicle through which violence was controlled.

Schmitt's intellectual efforts accepted that institutional 'Christianity,' Protestant or Catholic, should be at the core of internal social order in the west but stripped of its 'anarchistic' potential:

> "Hobbes articulated and provided scientific reason for what the Grand Inquisitor did: to make the effect of Christ harmless in the social and political sphere; to de-anarchise Christianity but to leave to it at the same time some kind of legitimating effect in the background and in any case not to do without it." (Schmitt, *Glossarium*, 243)

Wolfgang Palaver shows that Schmitt's understanding of the fundamental categories of politics as 'friend or foe' was driven less by support for authoritarian nationalism than by fear that the alternative to an external enemy was a civil war in a single world state. Within this framework, Schmitt

> longed for a pagan version of Christianity to protect the political offspring of the old sacred from its complete dissolution. This rather futile attempt is linked to his endorsement of the *katechon,* a biblical concept that he interprets as a restrainer against the death of cultures by keeping political friend-enemy patterns alive. (Palaver, "Carl Schmitt's 'Apocalyptic' Resistance," 70)

In similar vein, Leo Strauss was profoundly concerned at what he saw as the radicalising and destabilizing impact on modernity of Christian concepts like charity on the proper ordering of relationships through philosophical reasoning as classically articulated by Aristotle and Plato: For Strauss, the elevation of charity through the gospels beyond the sphere of private virtue destabilized the cultural order in a way he characterized as 'extreme':

> According to the modern project, philosophy or science was no longer to be understood as essentially contemplative and proud but as active and charitable; it was to be of service of man's estate; it was to enable man to become the master and owner of nature through the intellectual conquest of nature.[16]

In Strauss' view, the impulse of charity in Christianity forces philosophy to take reference outside itself and to subject itself to the goal of alleviating the suffering of humanity as a whole. However, it also increases the temptation to social engineering and religious persecution in society beyond the principles of wisdom. As John Ranieri argues, for Voegelin the wisdom and order of Athens was to be preferred to the dangers inherent in the egalitarianism of Jerusalem.[17]

If anything, Eric Voegelin encapsulates the same problem of the Christian revelation for politics even more clearly: "'The Christians' he says "were persecuted for a good reason; there was a revolutionary substance in Christianity that made it incompatible with paganism."[18] In a sense, the pagan world was doing what Caiaphas in John's gospel had already recognized: the exposure of the innocence of the victim was fatal for cultures built on the opposite premise. What made Christianity so dangerous, according to Voegelin, was what he called its capacity for 'radical de-divinisation', reflected in Girard's anthropology as 'desacralisation.' Voegelin saw that the idea of a universal God had a universal society as its logical corollary. But he remained highly skeptical that closed

societies could or should be replaced by an open society (Voegelin, *The New Science*, 158) believing that the Christian Fathers had overlooked the need for a civil theology.

Heightened awareness of the potentially violent consequences of the Christian revelation of the scapegoat mechanism is also visible in the later works of Girard. Girard's enormous contribution to our understanding is to lay out in scientific terms both the mimetic background to the anthropological crisis and to reveal more clearly than before the behavioural ubiquity of scapegoating, or resolving group violence by focussing it on an essentially random 'other.' In doing so, he allows us to make sense of the underpinning drivers of culture 'from the outside,' even as we also must recognise our own participation in its consequences and development.

Girard resisted overly particular applications of his insights, especially where they appeared to privilege specific political intervention. But in *Battling to the End*, Girard wrestles directly with modern European history, particularly the escalation of rivalry that led directly to the nuclear stand-off and the delusions underpinning progressive thought that conflict ultimately reaches a Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Instead, 'completing Clausewitz' means to trace the escalation of mimetic violence towards ever greater extremity, a reality that the world has already been living through since at least 1914. The apocalypse, in both its proper sense of revealing the invisible and its common sense of disastrous violent implosion, is already with us. (Girard, *Battling*)

Above all, events underlined Girard's insight that the path of revelation of the sacrificial mechanism (apocalypse) would be marked by ever more desperate, if ultimately hopeless, efforts to re-establish it:

> We will forever be tempted to restore the lost effectiveness of the traditional remedy by forever increasing the dosage, immolating more and more victims in holocausts that are meant to be sacrificial but that are progressively less so.[19]

But whereas in 1987, Girard emphasized that "to detect transcendent love-which remains invisible beyond the transcendent violence that stands between, we have to accept the idea that human violence is deceptive" (Girard, *Things Hidden*, 217) the Girard of 2010 writes more on the global nature of the mimetic rivalry now unleashed and the potential for 'escalation to the extremes' of violence which the loss of cultural structure sets loose:

> *On War* does indeed have to be completed in order to see where it leads. The treatise works like a fascinating mirror of its time. In a more realistic manner than Hegel,

> Clausewitz showed the utter powerlessness of politics against the escalation to extremes. Ideological wars, monstrous justifications of violence, have led humanity to the stage beyond war where we are today. The West is going to exhaust itself in a fight against Islamic terrorism, which Western arrogance has undeniably kindled . . . Violence can no longer be checked. From this point of view we can say that the apocalypse has begun. (Girard, *Battling*, 209–10)

It appears that the Hegelian triumph of liberal democracy, once declared by Francis Fukuyama the end of history[20] lasted but a moment. In the shadow of 9/11, the rise of global Islamist terror and the war against terror, all of this, including much of the Girardian literature has taken on an unmistakeable atmosphere of foreboding. Since then, the unprecedented Syrian refugee crisis in Europe, the flow of cross-Mediterranean migration and increasing evidence of white American angst about open borders have only multiplied the signs of deepening global uncertainty, as societies once regulated behind borders are increasingly brought into Friedman's flat earth. Political movements explicitly rooted in re-establishing 'friend and foe' relationships based on national boundaries, ethnic or even racial categories have reappeared across the western world, many of them making claims to a specifically 'Christian' heritage as the basis of the new exclusion.

All the signs are that the presumption of Western superiority is under siege. Despite increasingly frantic efforts to prevent change, cultural presumptions built on 'differences' of skin colour, religion, language or cultural complexity dissolve into violence. And, in the face of scandal, Christianity can no longer stand as the centre of a righteous moral order. Rather than restoring order, the resort to 'friend and foe' escalates the crisis, precisely because it now operates in a world in which the internal and the external no longer mark the boundaries of identity. Efforts to externalise the enemy create internal chaos. It is in this world that Brexit and its consequences appear to be emblematic rather than exceptional.

THE GOSPELS IN A CRISIS OF UNDIFFERENTIATION

If Girard is correct, what does it mean that we have reached a stage beyond war, where violence can no longer be checked and politics is utterly powerless? With Schmitt, Strauss, and Voegelin, we remain haunted by the Grand Inquisitor, and locked in the pact with the devil required to enable human order. As Girard described it:

> Either you are violently opposed to violence and inevitably play its game, or you are not opposed to it, and it shuts your mouth. In other words, the regime of violence cannot be brought out into the open. (Girard, *Things Hidden*, 218)

Czeslaw Milosz, among others, suspected that Dostoevsky himself struggled to escape the circle:

> the conclusion of *The Brothers Karamazov* allows us to doubt whether the destructive forces, which he observed, had found an effective counterweight in his mind. The pure youth Alyosha, at the head of his twelve schoolboys, like a boy scout troop, as a projection of Christian Russia capable of saving her from Revolution? That's just a bit too sweet and kitschy.[21]

Scandalously and inexorably, however, Girard's work, following Dostoevsky and in contrast to Schmitt, Strauss and Voeglin, went via Jerusalem, and above all through Jesus in the gospels. Even a casual reader is struck by the strangely parallel intensity of the political and religious background of the gospels. The nativity stories showcase power by contrasting Caesar Augustus's 'global' and authoritarian census with a stable birth and invert kingship in the contrast between Herod's Jerusalem and Mary's Bethlehem. Political and religious intrigue is the foil of the entire text, culminating in the passion. But what is striking, and perhaps to 'complete Girard', is that the gospel's primary concern is not so much to expose the crisis, let alone enter it, but to transcend it: to bring salvation from it.

As Girard has so often demonstrated, Jesus transcends the (already existing) mimetic crisis by speaking to its anthropological core from out of the middle of the prophetic tradition rather than to enter political rivalries. In contrast to the other Jewish parties—Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots and even John the Baptist—Jesus makes no effort to 'solve' the crisis from 'within itself' but points away from 'political' logic to what might be called after Girard its 'anthropological' or 'human' heart. In the face of repeated 'friend or foe' choices, Jesus proclaims a kingdom of friends. As the Jewish temple world implodes under Roman occupation, Jesus does not react to save its political authority but calls it to anti-sacrificial account. By 'calling a halt to the game,' however, he also necessarily crystallises the crisis.

Salvation in the gospel breaks from legal and cognitive certainty and towards mimetic security: hope and trust. In the sense of Emmanuel Levinas, it is a movement from totality to the infinite[22], from mimetic rivalry to mimetic service or, as Bergson might have it, from closed to open. In the face

of undifferentiation and the rise of mimetic rivalry over friend and foe that surrounds him Jesus' answer is 'follow me.' As Girard has so decisively shown 'follow me' is not a cognitive command but a mimetic invitation. It offers not an 'answer' or a 'solution' but a direction. It is to 'talk from walking,' not the other way around. As it turns out, it is to 'follow me' onto the other side of violence, and to speak from there.

In mimesis, the pivotal choice is not to 'follow or not' but who to follow. Jesus lives out Max Scheler's maxim that "every finite spirit believes either in a God or in an idol,"[23] in this case the God of love or a liar from the beginning? (John 8:44). Mimetic freedom cannot exist *outside of* relationships, only *in* relationship: never freedom *from* mimesis, but freedom *in* mimesis, albeit with a reality outside of culture in which there is neither rivalry nor violence but gift and endless creation (eternal life). 'Follow me' means to be imaged in relation to our model, in this case a non-violent and loving 'I am.' Jesus' response in the crisis of undifferentiation consuming the Jewish people in his own time is an invitation to *metanoia* to a non-violent father. As undifferentiation erodes cultural order, salvation is in a new mimesis outside the mimetic free for all. (Matt. 11:30: "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"). Rational autonomy is, in this light, a secular fantasy.

The task, as John 3:17 has it, is not "to condemn the world, but to save the world." The goal is not ultimately to diagnose (or understand) the problem but to offer a path through the sea. Jesus is not a condemnation of his own people but a call back to them. Jesus is not a rival but a choice. Jesus does not set out to break society but is present in a political and religious society already broken. This is not 'counter-culture' but 'contrast culture.' (N. Lohfink)[24]

The road to salvation necessarily passes through revelation, BOTH vindicating of the crucified and convicting the crucifers, an apocalypse made bearable only by the miracle of being forgiven and forgiving. Violence always understands itself in mimesis, as a reaction to a primary cause. It is always revenge. As a consequence, breaking the power of violence always first requires acknowledgement of our participation in it, and requires us to forego not only violence but revenge. To be in mimesis with Jesus as opposed to with political victimhood is always also to face responsibility and contrition and thereby to be freed to participate in forgiving. Condemnation is enfolded within salvation, and not vis a vis. Contrition is enfolded within being forgiven. Revelation is enfolded within following. Strength is enfolded within weakness. In psychic terms, resurrection presupposes crucifixion. As James Alison makes clear, the miracle is the revelation of the victim and the proclamation of forgiveness even beyond murder.[25]

The anxiety that the Jesus story within Christian culture has had a corrosive effect on the ability of culture stems from a paradox: Jesus already acts as if we have reached a stage beyond war, where violence can no longer be checked and politics is utterly powerless. Jesus in the gospels acts to save the world by recalling the Jewish world unambiguously to its prophetic origins *outside* of culture, yet over thousands of years, the claim has been proclaimed from *within* an explicitly Christian political-cultural order which is, by definition, exposed by the apocalypse it proclaims. According to Leo Strauss, the Bible made the global vision of humanity possible by slowly undermining those closed societies based on a friend-enemy distinction that he preferred.[26] But Christianity has always been driving towards the point which it also resists: that the only way out of the scapegoat mechanism is to first acknowledge our belonging to it. The only way to the scapegoat is to accept forgiveness as our participation in scapegoating is revealed. The road out of violence is a road which rejects the categories of 'good' and 'evil' as they apply to human beings and replaces them with those who are saved from mimetic frenzy and those who are not, those who are in mimesis with a god of forgiveness and love and those who are in mimesis with violence.

These categories cannot correspond to the friend and foe boundaries of any institution, and above all of Christianity. Within a Christian culture bounded by categories of friend and foe, or good and evil persons, the world is condemned but not saved. Christianity since Constantine has consciously functioned 'as culture' as often 'as unveiling culture.' Instead of sitting outside, it has often sat consciously at its apex. Rather than model freedom from the law, it has also been the law. 'Follow me' to the scapegoats in the gospel can never be boundaried by institutionalised Christianity. The most powerful hypocrisy in western society is always the Christian Church because it is judged from within. Christianity, precisely as a katechon, but in contrast to Schmitt, inevitably corrodes from the head down, saved only by a final conviction that life itself depends on forgiveness.

None of this resolves Milosz's plausibility crisis. And for as long as we remain within the world of 'the political,' Jesus always remains at best implausible and at worst inexplicable. But the biblical pattern is always to await the 'miraculous,' which throughout the Bible and in contrast to magic is always the unanticipated concrete irruption of the culturally unexpected, precisely because it does not reflect the closed pattern of mimetic cause and effect. Change outside the parameters of culture is only as implausible as feeding 5,000, opening the Red Sea or walking on the water.

From the perspective of the gospels, all real change is mimetic, not cognitive, and in a new mimetic relationship all things are possible. The mistake is always

to seek salvation, and to reason within (closed) cognitive certainty rather than to seek and find (open) mimetic relationship. Likewise, the only transformative change is a mimetic one. Everything else is simply moving the furniture.

Because this is change which takes its reference from outside politics, it also refuses categorisation as an 'anti-political' project, precisely because such categorisations simply replicate the pattern of friend and foe. The injunction to render unto Caesar is also an injunction not to rival with the political, while not giving licence to Caesar for sacrificial behaviour. Jesus does exhort his listeners to destroy the system but reminds everyone of their mimetic choices in a shift from a cognitive question to a mimetic response. Only when we understand the dynamics of mimetic desire in relationships, can we grasp how the gospels identifies those outside the mimetic rivalry as the blessed: theirs is the kingdom of heaven, they will be comforted, they will inherit the earth, they will be filled, they will be shown mercy, they will see God, they will be called children of God.

'PEACE-BUILDING' IN A WORLD OF UNDIFFERENTIATION

For Girard in his final work, the poet Friedrich Hölderlin becomes a central model. Locked in his tower in Tuebingen, Hölderlin withdrew from the political and social crisis around him, in contrast to the other intellectual 'giants' of his age. But Girard sees in Hölderlin a kind of intellectual hero, who grasped above all that only by withdrawal was it possible to avoid being pulled in by the mimetic vortex and to 'refuse revenge' (refuser la revanche).

But perhaps even Girard remains too cognitive. To 'refuse revenge' is not an autonomous intellectual act but a mimetic miracle, only available to us in mimesis with a model in whom revenge already does not exist. 'To refuse' is itself always given, or in more theological language, appears in the world as grace. The physical act of 'going into a room and closing the door 'remains secondary to the essential mimetic withdrawal from fascination with rivalry. Ultimately, the peacemakers are those who are enabled to be in the world (to be in the midst of the mimetic vortex) and to remain outside of the maelstrom. In mimesis, the choice is to be in the orbit of a model in whom revenge 'is not': and through whom refusal of revenge becomes a reality in the world.

In mimesis, however, the primary active step is not insisting on refusal, which ultimately remains within the cultural frame of control and sacrifice, but seeking and following a model of forgiveness. That model is inevitably the victim. In the Christian orbit that ultimately always returns to Jesus, as the 'saviour of the world.'

In a world in which politics is no longer decisive, all genuine peacebuilding is therefore primarily mimetic and primarily relational. Among Girard's decisive contributions to thinking about violence, conflict and peace are his insistence on the existential nature of the question of violence and his location of the question of human violence in anthropology rather than politics. Politics is neither the cause nor the answer to conflict but a cultural mechanism to manage a bigger question of violence rooted in mimetic rivalry. This apocalypse of politics underlying Girardian thought is that culture can no longer control the violence unleashed in undifferentiation. Critically, as the crisis is a crisis of extreme mimeticism, only a response rooted in the reality of mimetic relationships offers any prospect. All real change is mimetic, not cognitive. The only change that matters is a mimetic one. With whom/what are we mimetic? It is always 'foolishness to Greeks'.

In the real world, Girard represents a revolution. By recasting all talk of violence and conflict as a *mimetic* rather than a *cognitive* phenomenon, he reorientates all study of peace and 'peace building' away from politics to the quality of relationships, and away from the language of politics as totality towards the language of infinite human service and interaction. All work and talk about 'creating peace,' bringing 'injustice' to an end or arresting the spiral of revenge for the past which threatens to consume the future must now be reconsidered from here. Everything else is revealed as part of the escalation to the extremes and the crisis of undifferentiation. It is nothing less than a transcendence of realpolitik by the washing of human feet.

And we are on *the most* fragile of ground. Spoken in the wrong way, the claim that a way through the crisis of undifferentiation depends on a conversion to Jesus as forgiving victim itself runs the risk of merely fuelling the escalation it purports to address, by bringing a world steeped in Christian religiosity into deeper rivalry and causing instant scandal, both to secular and religions across the globe. But this cannot be the proclamation of 'Christianity' but the proclamation of the forgiveness of the victim in which there are no enemies, and which many people in many cultures and religions have been seeking since the foundations of the world, even as Jesus may be its most complete revelation (Goodhart[27]).

Decisively, Jesus in the gospels moves from preaching to silence, and from engagement to dying. It is a move from telling to showing or revealing, from the cognitive to the mimetic. In relation to the Jewish people Jesus 'incarnates;' and thus fulfils, the law. It is now the only way in which it can be proclaimed.

The translation of Girard's theory into the real world is therefore fraught with traps. As an instrumental tool, mimetic theory dissolves into the same

religious moralism which it seeks to escape. Girard himself was therefore always rightly concerned that an anthropological insight would be reduced again to a political tool.

Yet from a lens of mimetic theory, politics, like violence, cannot be 'overcome' only transformed in relationships. After the end of the Cold War the United Nations came under increasing pressure to expand its role from military peacekeeping, once itself a novel idea. In 1992, Boutros Boutros Ghali announced an 'Agenda for Peace' expanded into a comprehensive approach to include a commitment to 'Peace-keeping, Peace-making and Peace-building' along lines proposed by a Norwegian theorist Johann Galtung. Agenda for Peace shifted attention towards direct intervention in the structures of states and politics and the engagement of local communities. It also introduced a new distinction into the language of international stabilisation between what was called 'negative peace' defined by the absence of overt killing, and 'positive peace 'which focussed on the quality of relationships. Yet thirty years later, international peacebuilding faces accusations that it is little more than a new form of patronising liberal imperialism. What began as an acknowledgement of the depth of human violence, is now itself accused of being part of it.

The practical question is still: what does freedom from mimetic desire look like. But now, we are forced to move away from grand designs to steps, from the romantic to the romanesque, from formulae to parables. Peace-making in the global village is as much about taking steps and finding others as strategic plans. In every case it is about moving from the cognitive into the mimetic, from 'dialogue' to 'meeting.'

Reconciliation is only possible if those doing it live out of forgiveness. The place of the victim is not the place of moralism but a chance for contrition. To forgive now means that the things that were between us, the things done and not done consciously and unknown, have no consequences for our relationship—for how we are together. We are no longer in mimetic rivalry with one another, trying to retaliate or win. In this spirit we give and receive from one another. This is far beyond good will where we use others to be good. The triumph of the victim becomes an opening up for us, the also violent, to return to humanity. The exposure of prejudice (pre-judgement) is no longer a matter of shame, but a chance for release from myth (Kaptein, 1991[28]).

In practice, it is not about attacking or setting aside the remnants of political order but of transforming and calling them to a human purpose. Everything human must have shape, only now in mimesis with forgiveness we know that the law is death. What remains of the political now is reconfigured to serve the community of friends, and to constantly face its failures. Political leaders, and

all those in visible positions, have huge possibilities for mimetic good or evil. And our rituals should be designed as sacrament not sacrifice. But in every case, movement means mimetic contrast but not cognitive 'counter.' Unexpectedly, difference expands rather than contracts.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The crises of Northern Ireland and Brexit are not exceptional, but evidence of the crisis of undifferentiation which Girard illuminates, although the example of Northern Ireland as a small and mostly hidden precursor of the wider crisis suggests that politics in Schmitt's sense of friend and foe no longer offers anything other than more violence. Instead, our future depends entirely on decisions to seek transformed relationships in which the present objects of desire are no longer the core of mimetic rivalry.

In the context of my own journey with the question of violence and peace in Northern Ireland, I want to conclude by pointing to critical figures in my own life. The first is the figure of Ray Davey, a relatively unknown Irish protestant minister but the founder of the ecumenical community of which I am a member. As a young man, he found himself an inexperienced pastor to other prisoners of war in camps near Dresden. It was his highly unusual experience both to have direct contact with civilian Germans and to be a British soldier on the ground near Dresden in February 1945. Having witnessed the cataclysmic aerial bombings of his prison-city, it is now clear to me that Davey witnessed what Girard describes: the end of war and politics as a route through human violence. There simply is no escalation beyond Dresden without extinction. He also saw, that, however, flimsily, only a radically other relationship offered any exit from the frenzy. And it is to that apocalypse that I owe my own experience.

The second, in this year when he died, is the French-Canadian founder of the L'Arche Community, Jean Vanier. Vanier spent his life living out of his experience of community with people with profound learning disabilities. He wrote often about these experiences, but three of his insights seem to me to offer a way to conclude. "The belly laugh" he said: is the best way to evacuate anguish." More directly he directed us to "Stop looking for peace. Give yourselves where you are. Stop looking at yourselves and look at your brothers and sisters in need. Ask yourself how you can better love your brothers and sister and then you will find peace."[29] And finally: "Each human being, however small or weak has something to bring to humanity. As we start to really get to know others, as we begin to listen to each other's stories, things begin to change. We begin the

movement from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to trust, from closedness to openness, from judgement and prejudice to forgiveness and understanding. It is a movement of the heart."[30]

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